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2 **CLAIMS**  
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4 **1.** A method comprising:

5 loading one or more source processing chains to support execution of a  
6 development project; and

7 determining whether each of the one or more processing chains will be  
8 subsequently required during execution of this or another development project  
9 and, if so, caching those filter chains which will be subsequently required.  
10

11 **2.** A method according to claim 1, wherein loading of the one or more  
12 processing chains comprises:

13 identifying which source(s) will be required to support execution of the  
14 next M seconds of the development project;

15 searching one or more cache(s) to determine whether the source processing  
16 chain(s) associated with the source(s) are available within the one or more  
17 cache(s); and

18 retrieving the one or more processing chains from a memory location  
19 denoted by an associated one or more pointers in the cache for integration with the  
20 development project.  
21

22 **3.** A method according to claim 2, further comprising:

23 determining whether processing chain(s) retrieved from the cache(s) satisfy  
24 processing requirements of the development project; and  
25

1 modifying one or more objects of one or more of the processing chain(s)  
2 retrieved from the cache(s) that do not satisfy the processing requirements of the  
3 development project.

4  
5 4. A method according to claim 3, wherein modifying one or more  
6 objects may comprise one or more of adding processing objects to the processing  
7 chain(s), removing one or more processing objects from the processing chain(s),  
8 or changing one or more operating attributes of one or more processing objects  
9 within the processing chain(s).

10  
11 5. A method according to claim 2, wherein M is at least as long as  
12 necessary to construct a processing chain.

13  
14 6. A method according to claim 1, wherein determining whether a  
15 processing chain will subsequently be required comprises:

16 determining whether any future calls to a source coupled to the processing  
17 chain exist within this development project; and

18 determining whether any future calls to a source coupled to the processing  
19 chain may be received during execution of future development projects.

20  
21 7. A method according to claim 6, wherein it is assumed that each  
22 processing chain may well be required to support future execution of this or a  
23 future development project.  
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1        8.    A method according to claim 1, wherein caching the processing chain  
2 comprises:

3        assigning the processing chain a unique identifier; and  
4        storing the unique identifier along with a pointer to a memory location  
5 occupied by the processing chain in a cache.

6  
7        9.    A method according to claim 8, wherein the unique identifier is one  
8 or more of a source file handle, a source file name, a random numeric identifier  
9 uniquely assigned to the processing chain, a graphical icon, an alphanumeric  
10 character, and the like.

11  
12        10.   A storage medium comprising a plurality of executable instructions  
13 which, when executed, implement a method according to claim 1.

14  
15        11.   A computing system comprising:  
16        a storage medium having stored therein a plurality of executable  
17 instructions; and  
18        an execution unit, coupled to the storage medium, to execute at least a  
19 subset of the plurality of executable instructions to implement a method according  
20 to claim 1.

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22        12.   A method comprising:  
23        generating a source chain for use in a development project; and  
24        caching the source chain when it is not currently required in the  
25 development project.

1  
2       **13.**    A method according to claim 12, wherein the processing chain is  
3 cached only if it will subsequently be required in the development project, or a  
4 future development project.

5  
6       **14.**    A method according to claim 12, wherein caching the source chain  
7 comprises:

8       generating an identifier which is uniquely assigned to the processing chain;  
9 and

10       storing the identifier along with a pointer to memory occupied by the  
11 processing chain in a cache of processing chain pointers.

12  
13       **15.**    A method according to claim 14, wherein the identifier is one or  
14 more of a source file handle, a file name, an icon, a randomly generated number  
15 uniquely assigned to the processing chain, an alphanumeric identifier, and the like.

16  
17       **16.**    A method according to claim 12, further comprising:  
18 identifying a need for a source processing chain; and  
19 retrieving a suitable processing chain from a cache of such processing  
20 chains.

21  
22       **17.**    A method according to claim 16, further comprising:  
23 integrating the retrieved processing chain into the development project.  
24  
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1       **18.**   A method according to claim 16, further comprising:  
2       modifying one or more attributes of the retrieved processing chain before  
3       integration into the development project.

4  
5       **19.**   A method according to claim 18, wherein modification to the  
6       retrieved processing chain may include one or more of adding processing objects  
7       to the processing chain, removing processing objects from the processing chain,  
8       altering one or more processing characteristics of one or more processing objects  
9       of the processing chain, and the like.

10  
11       **20.**   A storage medium comprising a plurality of executable instructions  
12       which, when executed, implement a method according to claim 12.

13  
14       **21.**   A computing system comprising:  
15       a storage medium having stored therein a plurality of executable  
16       instructions; and  
17       an execution unit, coupled to the storage medium, to execute at least a  
18       plurality of the instructions to implement a method according to claim 12.

19  
20       **22.**   A system comprising:  
21       a plurality of sources; and  
22       an interface, selectively coupled to the plurality of sources, to generate and  
23       implement a development project of processing chains, wherein the interface loads  
24       a processing chain for each of the plurality of media sources at a point during the  
25

1 execution of the project when the chain is required, and wherein the interface is  
2 configured to unload at least a subset of the chains when they are not required.

3  
4 **23.** A system according to claim 22, wherein the interface only loads  
5 those processing chains required during the next M seconds of project execution,  
6 and if a current chain-count does not exceed a threshold, T.

7  
8 **24.** A system according to claim 23, wherein M is less than a time  
9 required to load a processing chain.

10  
11 **25.** A system according to claim 23, wherein if the currently loaded  
12 chain-count has reached a threshold, T, the interface identifies one or more  
13 currently loaded chains that can be unloaded.

14  
15 **26.** A system according to claim 25, wherein the interface identifies one  
16 or more currently loaded chains that will not be used during the next N seconds to  
17 unload.

18  
19 **27.** A system according to claim 25, wherein the interface determines  
20 whether the identified one or more chains will be required during subsequent  
21 execution of the project, or in a future project and, if so, caches the identified  
22 chain(s).

1       **28.**   A system according to claim 27, wherein the interface assigns a  
2 unique identifier to processing chains to be cached, and stores the unique identifier  
3 along with a pointer to memory wherein the processing chain resides in a  
4 processing chain cache.

5  
6       **29.**   A system according to claim 22, wherein the interface removes the  
7 identified chains from the active project and caches the removed chains.

8  
9       **30.**   A system according to claim 22, wherein the interface loads  
10 processing chains by first searching a cache of processing chains for a suitable  
11 match.

12  
13       **31.**   A system according to claim 30, wherein if the interface identifies a  
14 suitable match, the processing chain is retrieved from memory for integration  
15 within the processing project.

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17       **32.**   A system according to claim 31, wherein the interface modifies one  
18 or more attributes of the retrieved processing chain before integration within the  
19 processing project.  
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1       **33.**   A system according to claim 32, wherein modifying the processing  
2 chain, the interface performs one or more of adding one or more processing  
3 objects to the processing chain, removing one or more processing objects from the  
4 processing chain, modifying one or more processing characteristics of one or more  
5 processing objects within the processing chain.